



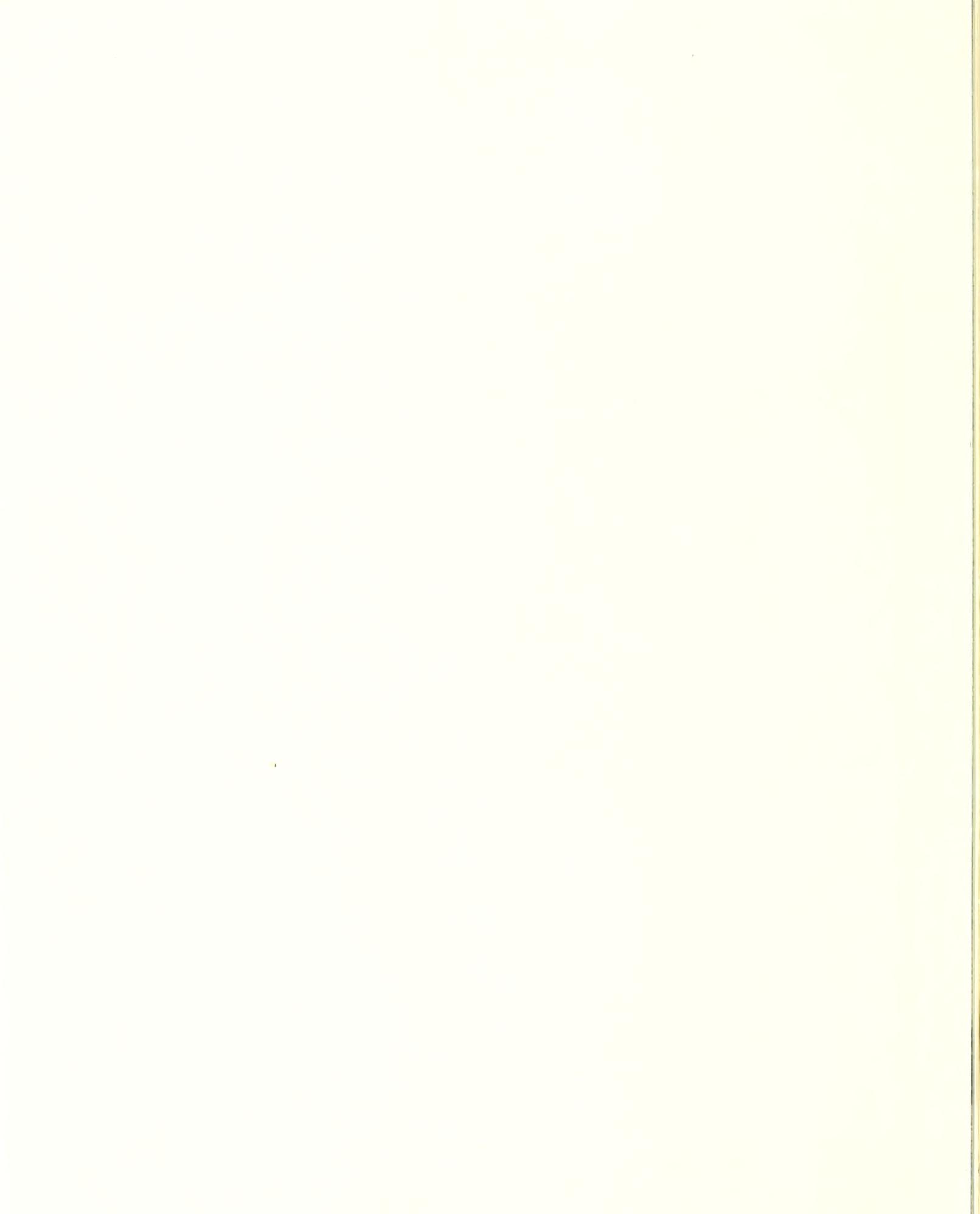


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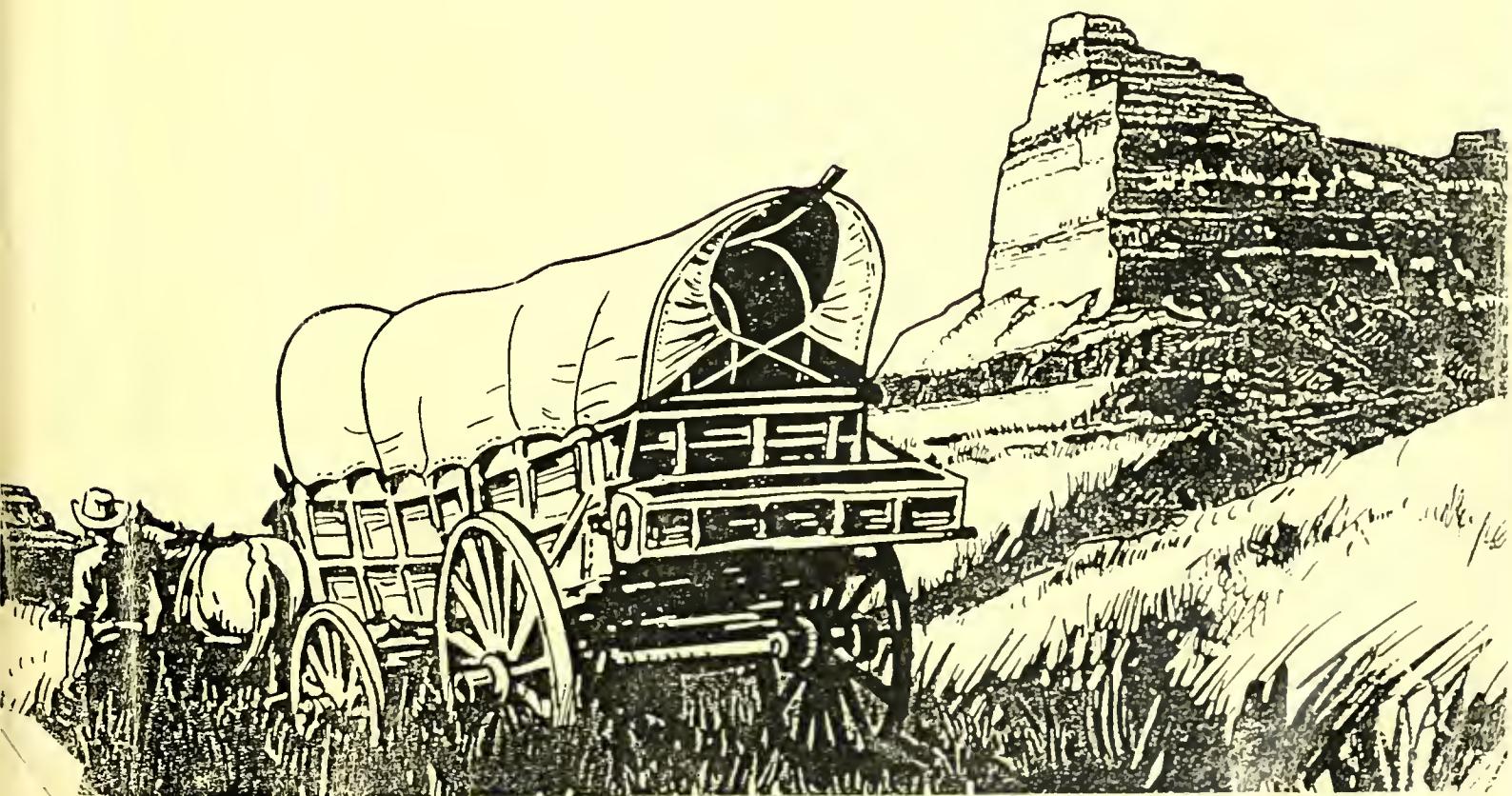


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## OVERLAND TO CALIFORNIA

Notes from a journal kept by Mrs. Francis H. Sawyer in a journey across the Plains.

MAY 9 TO AUGUST 17, 1852

and compiled for the entertainment of the readers of the Breckinridge News.

Published at Cloverport, KY in six installments. Dates in parenthesis are when articles appeared in paper.



(Feb. 14, 1894)

Installment # 1

We left Louisville, Ky., on the 25th day of April, 1852 passengers on the steamer, "Pike No 9" bound for St. Louis.

Mr. Sawyer bought his wagon and two mules and some of the supplies which we would need on our long and tedious journey across the western plains, in Louisville. He had bought two more mules, and the steamer stopped at his father's farm in Hancock County, Ky., to take these animals aboard. At St. Louis we changed on to a small Missouri-river steamboat, and came up that river to St. Joseph. Here it was necessary to lay in the remainder of our supplies, so Mr. Sawyer bought a single-horse carriage for my use and one more mule.

There are four persons in our company-Mr. Sawyer and myself and two young men, Burk Hall and Benjamin Sampson, from Hancock County, KY. Mr. Sampson is my cousin. He is a consumptive, and is going out hoping that the trip may benefit his health. These gentlemen pay my husband for the expense of their trip, and he furnishes everything except one mule bought by Burk Hall.

This is not the first trip for Mr. Sawyer. He was in the great California rush of '49, and went over with a large pack train. In this train was one wagon loaded with medicine, to be used in case of sickness. He drove this wagon all the way himself, and was thus the first man who ever drove a wagon over the Sierra Nevada mountains. He knows just what we will need on this trip and has made his purchases accordingly.

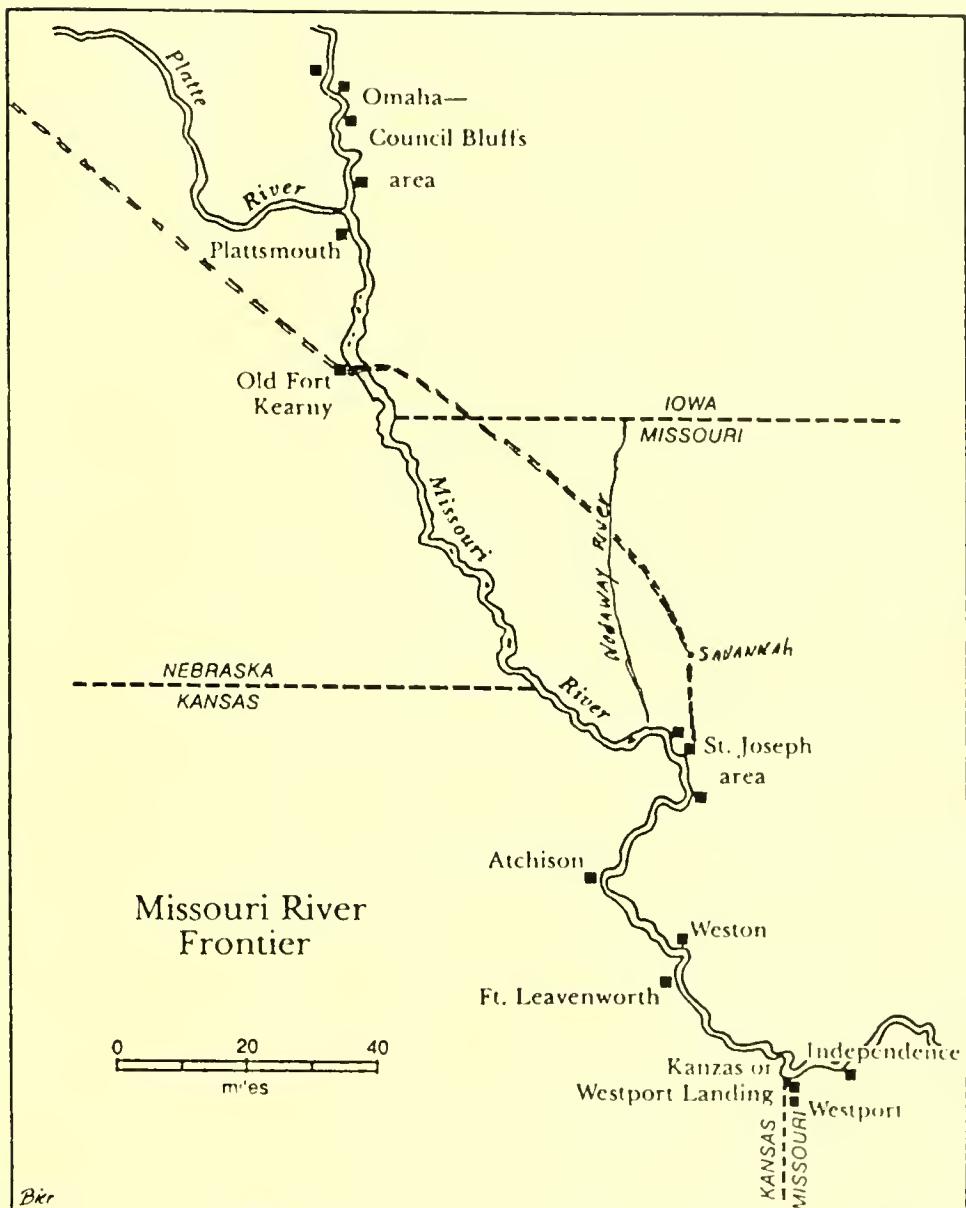
Two days after our arrival in St. Joseph all the preparations for our long overland journey were completed, and we came out and camped six miles from the city.

May 9. We left camp this morning, and soon found that our road was as hard to travel as the proverbial one that leads to Jordan. The mud was so deep and tough that our team of four mules mired down and stuck tight on two different occasions, and we were greatly delayed in having to stop and get them out. Our progress was very slow.

We passed through Savannah, a small village, and went into camp one mile and a half beyond that place. We intend to travel in Missouri until we reach old Fort Kearney, where we expect to cross the Missouri river.

Grass for our mules is very short here to-night. Distance traveled to-day, eight miles.





MAP I

-----Approximate route taken by Frances H. LaMar Sawyer, her husband Thomas Henry Sawyer, her cousin Ben Sampson and Burk Hall. All were from Hancock County Kentucky.

See maps 2 and 3 also



May 10. We started out this morning with renewed courage, hoping that we might not be visited by similar trials and difficulties to those of yesterday, but our hopes and desires went to nought. Our mules mired again before we went far, and our progress was much impeded. We find some very bad branches, brooks and ravines to cross. It seems that the farmers in this section take no interest in improving their roads, and this makes it so disagreeable for emigrants. It commenced raining this evening, and everything is very gloomy and unpleasant.

We pitch our camp by a flowing creek of good water where the grass is very plentiful. Distance traveled to-day, twelve miles.

May 11. We came to the Nodaway, a small river, before noon today, crossed the stream, and are in camp on its bank. We were informed at the ferry that there was no more grass for a distance of twelve miles, and as it is plentiful here we want our mules to get a good feed and be well rested before we start over the long barren stretch. Distance traveled, ten miles.

May 12. We got along without much difficulty today, as our roads are improving somewhat. Our way lay over a beautiful prairie.

My mule and carriage go along so nicely and comfortably. She never stops for mud-holes. She is the best animal we have. Mr. Sawyer bought her of Dr. Scott, of Cloverport, and she is named for the Doctor's daughter, Jennie.

We have but little grass tonight. Distance traveled, twenty miles.

May 13. Ben Sampson was so unfortunate this morning as to meet with a painful accident. In crossing a deep hollow he got his foot caught between the doubletree and wagon box and the member was severely sprained. He has suffered greatly all day.

We have had several showers of rain this afternoon, but I keep dry and comfortable. I sleep in my carriage every night on a feather bed, and am not exposed in any way in bad weather. The boys sleep either in the wagon or in the tent. Distance traveled, twenty miles.

May 14. We arrived within one mile of old Fort Kearney this evening, and Mr. Sawyer sent to the ferry to register his name. To our discomfort we learned that there were a great many before us waiting to cross, and it will probably be several days before our turn will come.



Our road has been over a prairie today and it was very good. We passed through Linden, another small village, and crossed several large creeks on bridges, and ferried one.

Ben's foot is better, though he is not yet able to walk.

We have pitched our camp on the edge of the prairie, in a grove of timber. Distance traveled, twenty-two miles.

May 15. One of our mules got away last night and Mr. Sawyer has had a chase for it today. He had to go back six miles before he caught her. She is so wild and hard to break to work.

We sent to the ferry today to learn when we could cross, and were informed that we could not possibly get over before tomorrow or the next day. Mr. Sawyer dislikes having to wait here so long. He is anxious to be traveling all the time, and I prefer it myself.

We have had more rain today, and the indications are that it will continue tonight.

The grass is not good here.

May 16. Sabbath day. I have been in my carriage all day, for it is very disagreeable out. The wind commenced blowing at a high rate last night and it has continued to blow a perfect gale ever since. Mr. Sawyer got up in the night and pulled the carriage, with me in it out into the prairie for fear that timber would fall on us.

The men do all the cooking in bad weather, though I never have to do anything but make up the bread.

May 17. We are still in camp, waiting and watching for our time to come to cross the Missouri, but it seems to be very uncertain when that will be.

Mr. Sawyer went out hunting this morning and killed a deer. This was very acceptable to all of us, as fresh meat is quite a treat on a trip like this.

May 18. The wind is blowing very hard today and the waves are rolling so high in the river that the ferry cannot run. This camp is growing monotonous and we are all so anxious to get away and continue our journey.

Up to this time 906 wagons have crossed the river here this year.

May 19. We drove up to the ferry this afternoon thinking



that probably we might get over. However, we soon learned that we would have to content ourselves 'till morning.

The old Fort is on the opposite side of the river, but there is not much of it left to be seen.

The ferryman has a log cabin here and keeps some groceries and whiskey to sell at high prices.

May 20. After having been delayed a week, we succeeded in getting safe across the river this morning. And here we make another start on our long journey, hoping that we will not again be delayed for so long a time.

We are now in the Indian country, and we suspect that it will not be many days before we see some of these wild natives.

We are in camp tonight with a small company of emigrants, among whom are several ladies. These, like myself, were all engaged in helping to cook supper, and I have no doubt but that they all enjoyed it heartily, as I did.

There is an abundance of grass. Distance traveled, sixteen miles.

May 21. Mr. Sawyer was taken sick last night with a hard chill and he has a high fever today. I feel very uneasy about him and sincerely hope that he will not have a hard spell of sickness, for on the plains is a bad place to be sick. We have a good supply of all kinds of medicine with us, but doctors are very hard to find.

It began to rain last night and it has continued to pour down nearly all this day. We did not leave camp 'till nearly 3 o'clock this afternoon. Distance traveled, eight miles.

May 22. Mr. Sawyer is some better today, and he hopes to soon be well again.

We picked some nice prairie peas today but they can not be considered as much of a luxury, as they are only good for making pickles.

The roads are very good now, and we go along with ease, making good time. Distance traveled, twenty-six miles.

(Feb. 21, 1894)

Installment # 2.

May 23. Sabbath. We camped this afternoon at 2 o'clock, to



rest the remainder of the day.

WE have been traveling, for several days, in company with an old gentleman and his family. He had with him his wife, two sons, daughter and daughter's husband. The daughter is dressed in bloomer costume-pants, short skirt and red-top boots. I think it is a very appropriate dress for a trip like this. So many ladies wear it, that I almost wish that I was so attired myself. The old lady wears a short skirt and pantletts. She is fifty years old. Her health was not good when she started, but it is improving now. Distance traveled, sixteen miles.

May 24. Today has been a very warm one, but nothing startling has occurred to break the nonotony of the trip. The roads, however continue good and we are making rapid strides toward the far West.

Mr. Sawyer guards his mules of nights now, for fear that the Indians may steal them. Distance traveled, thirty miles.

May 25. We came to the Platte river today. It is a wide and shallow stream, and its water is warm and muddy. There is some timber on its banks and on the islands.

Some Indians are in camp near us tonight, and they came over to our camp, begging for something to eat. They are not very pleasant looking guests, though they seem to be friendly and peaceable. Distance traveled, twenty-five miles.

May 26. A large party of Pawnee Indians passed us this morning going on to their hunting grounds after buffalo, and this afternoon we met them returning. They had met a party of Sioux, and the result was a battle took place. The Sioux had whipped them, killing and scalping two of the party and wounding several others. The Pawnees were very angry and badly frightened. Some were armed with bows and some with guns. I met some ladies that saw the fight, and they said that they were scared almost to death themselves. The Pawnees had made a poor fight.

There were only thirteen Sioux and they whipped sixty or seventy Pawnees. When we came to where the battle had been fought, Mr. Sawyer and I drove off the road a short distance to see one of the Indians who had been killed. It was the most horrible sight I ever saw. Four or five arrows were sticking in his body and his scalp was gone, leaving his head bare, bloody and ghastly. I am sorry I went out to look at him. I have had the blues ever since.

We are in camp with a large company of emigrants tonight, and have out a strong guard. So we women are safe and secure



from danger, and may rest in peace and comfort, if we don't dream of dead Indians.

The grass is good here, but mosquitoes are very bad. Distance traveled, twenty-two miles.

May 27. Morpheus cozily wrapped us all in his arms last night, and the pleasant dreams of our far-away Kentucky were not disturbed by the Indians either dead or alive. I have plucked some beautiful prairie flowers today. The prairie is very pretty, dressed in its May bright colors, and the atmosphere is sweet with it's fragrance. The flowers somewhat resemble the bloom of the sweet pea. Distance traveled, twenty-five miles.

May 28. Nothing of startling importance happened today. The same old monotony--endless prairies. Distance traveled, thirty miles.

May 29. We arrived at New Fort Kearney at 2 o'clock this afternoon and went into camp near it. We wrote some letters home and mailed them at the Fort. The Fort is a neat little place, kept in the best of order, and the best of order is kept in it. There are several ladies here with their husbands who are officers. They keep an account of the number of emigrants who pass this place, and a soldier came out this afternoon to get our names to register. Distance traveled today, fifteen miles.

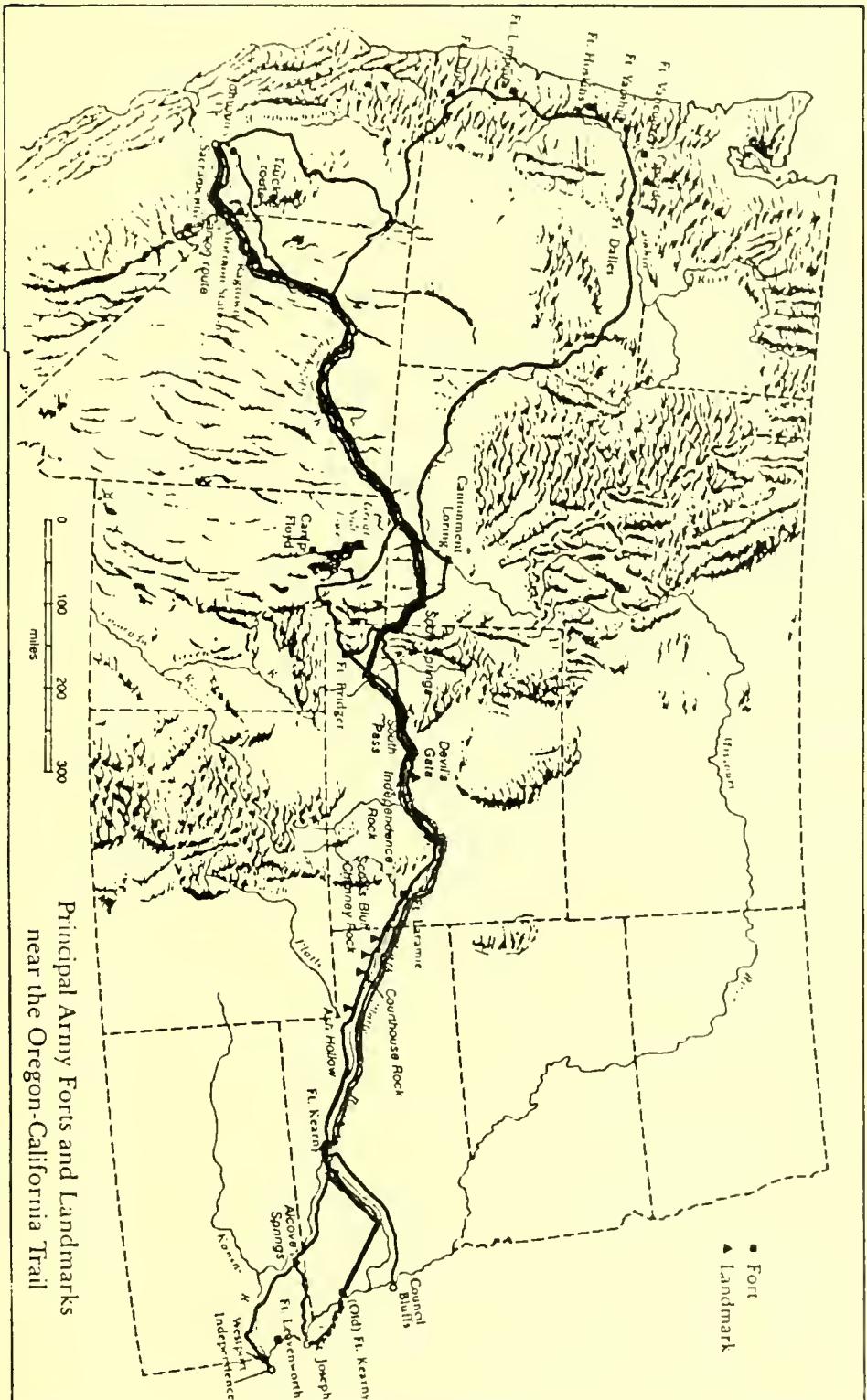
May 30. Sabbath. We passed the Fort this morning and kept the bank of the Platte river till we arrived at a point ten miles above, where we forded the stream.

The Platte is a mile wide at this point, and our wagons pulled very hard in the quick-sand. Mr. Sawyer went over in the carriage with me. The water was so deep that our mule had to swim in some places. I was greatly frightened and held on tightly to my husband. When we got over Mr. Sawyer took the mule out of the carriage and went back on her to help the boys over with the wagon. The mules stopped once and the wagon settled down so that oxen had to be procured to help start it again. At last they got over safe, and as the wagon box had been propped up, everything kept dry, though in this we were more fortunate than many others who were crossing today. Many had their effects greatly damaged by water.

We went into camp on the bank of the river where we had crossed.

May 31. We have traveled all day in heat and dust. It is quite warm and dusty now, and the grass is not good.





MAP 2



Distance traveled, twenty-eight miles.

June 1. We heard of three very sudden deaths this morning and the disease is supposed to be cholera. The emigrants in traveling over the plains, dig shallow wells to procure cold water. This water is strongly impregnated with alkali, and, it is thought, that by drinking this, these unfortunate people have been taken severely sick and died.

We are making good time now. Distance traveled, twenty-eight miles.

June 2. We are now in the Buffalo Regions, and the only fuel we have is buffalo chips. These make a good, hot fire. We are in camp near the Shawnee Springs. The water is very fine, cold as ice and clear as crystal. We enjoy this treat very much, after having been compelled to use the unwholesome water contained in the shallow wells of the plains for several days past. The grass is also very good here. Distance traveled, twenty-five miles.

June 3. We had a hard rain and thunder-storm last night and it is cool and pleasant to-day. We camp by a creek of good, clear water to-night. This is to our liking as the water of the Platte is so warm that we avoid its use whenever it is possible to do so. Distance traveled, twenty-five miles.

June 4. Today we passed a great many new-made graves, and we hear of many cases of the cholera. We hear of so much sickness that we are becoming fearful for our own safety. Distance traveled, twenty miles.

June 5. One of the men in the camp of the old gentleman who is traveling with us was taken sick with cholera last night and it is thought that he will die.

We have not left camp today, though the doctors say that it is much better to be traveling.

June 6. Sabbath day. The sick man is some better, but other members of the company have similar symptoms. The disease is very bad among the emigrants, being more prevalent among the ox teams than the others. There was more rain last night, and it is still cooler today. It is hoped that this will check the disease somewhat. Distance traveled, twenty-two miles.

June 7. It rained again last night and is still cool and windy.

Mr. Sawyer has slight symptoms of cholera this evening, but hopes to get it checked before it becomes serious. Distance



traveled. twenty-five miles.

June 8. Mr. Sawyer is better to-day. We met some Mormons from Salt Lake, and they told us there was no sickness ahead of us. This gives us brighter hopes and encourages us greatly.

We passed Castle Ruins to-day. They are large stones on the top of a hill, and they resemble old ruins very much, though it was the hand of nature that placed them there. Distance traveled, twenty-five miles.

June 9. It is now one month since we left St. Joseph, and we have traveled a little more than 500 miles, making an average of about seventeen miles a day. We still have a long, rugged and weary road before us that will take us many weeks to go over.

The health of the emigrants is so much better that we don't hear of any deaths now.

We passed Chimney Rock and Court-house Rock today. They were both on the opposite side of the Platte from us, but we could see them very distinctly. Distance traveled, thirty-one miles.

June 10. We "nooned" today opposite the Scott's Bluffs. These bluffs were named for a man by the name of Scott, who perished under them for the want of food. The story of his death is a pitiful one. The view of the bluffs was grand and beautiful from our position.

A Mr. Fox and his son, of Louisville, KY caught up with us today, and they will travel with us a while. Mr. Sawyer had a slight acquaintance with him in Louisville. Distance traveled, twenty-four miles.

(Feb 28, 1894)

Installment # 3

June 11. We are in sight of Laramie Peak now, though it will be several days before we are opposite it.

We have driven fast today and passed a great many ox teams, though the dust is so heavy that it almost blinds us. Distance traveled, thirty miles.

June 12. We arrived opposite Fort Laramie in time to camp for the night. The Fort is on the south side of the Platte. We will lay over here tomorrow as Mr. Sawyer wishes to get a mule shod and make some purchases of a few things that we



need. They keep supplies here, but sell at high prices.

June 13. Sabbath day, and my birthday, too, just twenty-one. I have been in bed most all day, taking a good rest and trying to sleep.

Mr. Sawyer got one shoe put on his mule and the others tightened. Cost him five dollars. We had to leave camp late this afternoon and come out where we could get grass for the mules. Distance traveled, six miles.

June 14. We are now in the Black Hills. The scenery is very beautiful. Pines and Cedars are scattered over the hills and beautiful flowers are abundant. I gather tulips and larkspurs and many other lovely kinds that I cannot name. Distance traveled, twenty-two miles.

June 15. We passed an Indian camp today. A Frenchman living there keeps a trading post in a wagon. He has a squaw for a wife who has borne him several children. These seem playful and happy. Distance traveled, twenty-five miles.

June 16. Nothing has occurred or been seen worthy of note today. Same old weary road to travel. Distance traveled, thirty miles.

June 17. We have a heavy sand road to travel now. It is very hard on the mules.

Mr. Sawyer killed a fine antelope this morning, whose fragrant flesh was quite a luxury for us.

Grass is not good here and mosquitoes are very bad. Distance traveled, twenty-three miles.

June 18. We heard today that a murdered man had been found in a deep hollow a short distance from the road. The men who found him had seen him before and knew him. They think that he was murdered for his money, as he was known to have a considerable amount, and it is thought that his murderers are in the company with which he was traveling. He had a wife and one child. Great must be their sorrow to be thus so cruelly deprived of a dear friend and protector, and left alone in this wild and friendless country. Some men have gone in pursuit of the murderers.

Just ahead of us a wagon ran over a little boy and broke both his legs. Distance traveled, twenty miles.

June 19. We heard of another murdered man today. In this case, as in yesterday's, the man was murdered by a man in his own company, but the proof in this instance was positive, and



the murderer was hung to a tree by the indignant emigrants.

We passed opposite the ferry on the North Fork of the Platte. Numbers of emigrants were there waiting to get over, but we were saved the trouble and expense of ferrying now by having forded the main Platte several days ago. We camped at the Willow Spring, where the water is cold and good. Distance traveled, thirty-one miles.

June 20. Sabbath day. We left the Platte for good today. Passed the famous Independence Rock, and went into camp one mile from it, near the first crossing of Sweetwater river. This rock is a great curiosity, standing, as it does, here on the level plain, single and alone, hundreds of miles from any companion. It is a huge granite pile 600 feet long, 200 feet wide and 75 feet high. It should have been named Emigrant's Register, as it contains thousands of names on its smooth surface, some being carved, some being placed there with paint, and others with tar. The Sweetwater runs along within a few hundred yards of the rock. We have had a long and tiresome march today without much water or grass for our mules. The grass is not good tonight, and the only fuel we have is wild sage. Distance traveled, twenty-two miles.

June 21. We have laid by today as we found good grass for the mules not more than a mile from camp.

Dr. Barkwell, from Troy, Indiana, caught up with us today. We would not have known of his presence, had not one of our boys seen him when he was watering his oxen near us, and called to him. He informed us that his youngest child had died on the plains, which I was very sorry to hear. The trials and troubles of this long, wearisome trip are enough to bear without having our hearts torn by the loss of dear ones.

We went to the big rock this afternoon and placed our names on it. A rain caught us while there, and we had to shelter under the projecting shelves of the rock.

We can see a burning volcano on the mountains near us tonight.

June 22. We forded Sweetwater river this morning and passed near the Devil's Gate. This is a pass where the river has washed a channel through the mountains.

While we were nooning today there came up the hardest hail storm that it had ever been my lot to witness. The stones came down thick and fast, and they were as large as walnuts, none smaller than large bullets. The wind blew so hard and furiously that all the animals within our hearing stampeded.



All hands had a hard time getting them together again. Some escaped entirely, but we had the good fortune to recover all of ours. Some of our men got bruised heads and hands by the heavy hailstones striking them. I was badly frightened, and thought the wind would surely blow us away. We are still at our nooning place. Distance traveled, ten miles.

June 23. We have concluded to go to California instead of Oregon, as was our first intention. I am greatly pleased by this change of intentions, as I had much rather go to California. My brother, B.B. Lamar, is there, and to see him is a greater inducement for me than the whole of Oregon can offer. Distance traveled, twenty-two miles.

June 24. We are in sight of the Rocky Mountains now, and we can see the glistening snow on the tops of the high peaks.

We camp with Dr. Barkwell, wife and little daughter tonight. I am so glad to meet them, and I enjoy their company so much, as they are the only persons that I have met on the broad plains that I ever knew before.

Forded Sweetwater river twice today. Distance traveled, twenty-seven miles.

June 25. We passed a trading post today. The keeper is a Frenchman. Mr. Sawyer exchanged his wagon for a lighter one, as ours was too heavy for four mules to pull over the mountains. The wagon he got in the trade is not as good as the one we had, but when you trade for anything on this trip, you usually give double value for what you get in return. He also exchanged the wild mule that he bought at St. Joseph, for an Indian pony. The pony is not half as valuable as the mule, but we never could break the mule to work or ride well.

We are ascending the Rocky Mountains, but the ascent is so gradual that one would hardly know that he is going up a mountain. We pass plenty of snow and had all the ice-water that we cold use. Distance traveled, fifteen miles.

June 26. Passed through the South pass today, and commenced decending the mountains on the western side. We soon came to the Pacific Springs and went into camp a few miles from them. Mr. Sawyer started out from the springs to hunt a good place to pitch our camp, and we got lost from him. We got on a wrong road and did not get back to the emigrants road 'till ten o'clock at night. I was so worried about him, and for fear that he could not find us otherwise, I got all the men near us to fire off their guns and pistols. He heard the firing and came directly to us. Distance traveled, twenty-eight miles.



June 27. We crossed Dry Sandy creek this morning. There are some pools of brackish water in it, though it is not fit to use. We came to the forks of the road, the left being the road to Salt Lake and the other the Fort Hall route. We took the Salt Lake Road, though we do not know yet whether we will go by there or take some of the cut-offs. We are all anxious to see the Mormon city, but that route is 90 miles longer than the other, and we don't much like to travel that far out of our way just to see it.

We forded the Little Sandy. Distance traveled, twenty miles.

June 28. We forded the Big Sandy today and camp twelve miles from Green river on a beautiful meadow. The grass is so good that our mules are feasting tonight. Distance traveled, twenty-five miles.

(Mch 7, 1894)

Installment #4

June 29. Soon came to Green river and got ferried over it and camped one mile from the ferry. There is a trading post at the ferry and some Indians are in camp around it.

We have taken the McKinney cut-off, as we thought it better to take all the advantages of the trip we could, than to satisfy our desire to see Salt Lake.

I saw some beautiful bloom of cactus today. They were of many different colors. Distance traveled, thirteen miles.

June 30. Mr. Sawyer went off the road this morning on his pony and killed two sage hens. We ate them for dinner, and they were delicious. He was in sight of us all the time, though I drove along for several miles before he got back to the road. I drive a great deal now, as I am very fond of handling the lines.

Our road has not all been good today. We passed one good spring of water and went in camp near another one on the top of a Shoshone hill. Distance traveled, thirty miles.

July 1. We traveled, over some very steep mountains today, and again came into the main road.

We are now in the Bear-river mountains. Passed through a pine grove and a quaking aspen grove.

Tonight we visited an adjoining camp to see a lady and her little daughter, who had been turned over in a carriage today while coming down a steep mountain side. When the husband



and father got to them he thought that they were killed, but now it is thought that they are only painfully and not seriously hurt.

We saw some very beautiful landscapes today. The principal stream crossed was Ham's fork of Bear river. Distance traveled, thirty miles.

July 2. Came to the main Bear river today, and forded Smith's Fork. It was a very rocky and dangerous ford. We went into camp on the bank of the river and thought we would fish some, but the mosquitoes were so thick, so brave and so resolute that all our time was occupied in fighting them off. I never saw the like of mosquitoes in all my life before, and we thought that they would surely eat us up. The grass is good here, but our mules could not eat any until 8 o'clock or after, when the mosquitoes left us. Distance traveled, thirty miles.

July 3. Crossed Thomas' fork of Bear river on a toll bridge. Cost us one dollar per wagon. There is a ford eight miles out of our way, but it is not very good, so we concluded to toll. We went over some very steep mountains today too.

Ben Sampson is real sick this after noon, with high fever and a headache. He has taken cold, but the mountain air is so bracing that I think he will soon feel better. He has stood the trip so well this far that I have hopes of his health being greatly benefited.

The mosquitoes are nearly as bad tonight as they were last night. Distance traveled, thirty miles.

July 4. Sabbath day. We arrived at the noted Soda Springs this afternoon. Stopped and went out to see them. I made some soda drinks and cream tartar with the water, and they were very nice and cool. I brought some to Ben and he enjoyed it very much. Said it made him feel much better. The Soda Springs is one of the natural curiosities of our country that is worth seeing. The water is so beautiful foaming up out of the crevices of the rock.

It is quite cool here this evening and it snowed on the mountain and rained in the valley where we were.

We camped three miles beyond the Soda Springs under a mountain. We have plenty of good pine wood and lots of grass.

I traded a string of beads to an Indian boy for some fish, and we ate them for supper. Distance traveled, twenty-



seven miles.

July 5. Lying by today to celebrate the Fourth, as we had to travel yesterday.

We went fishing this morning, then came back and cooked a good dinner. We had canned vegetables, fish rice-cakes and other little dishes.

We see lots of Indians now, and some are at our camp most all the time. They usually want to trade fish for fish hooks and something to eat.

We found ice on the water in camp this morning, so you can see how cold it sometimes is here on the glorious Fourth. We were glad to get the ice water to drink.

July 6. We took Sublett's cut-off six miles from Soda Springs. We have been told that it is ninety miles shorter than the Fort Hall route, but we had some very bad roads today. Distance traveled, twenty miles.

July 7. Mr. Sawyer traded our Indian pony for a two year old colt today. The colt is not worth much, but we were glad to get that much for the pony as it was nearly given out. So you see that we lost money on that plaguy wild mule that we bought at St. Joseph.

Traveled over two large mountains and camp in a valley. Distance traveled, seventeen miles.

July 8. Went over two more mountains today, and pitched our camp on Gravel creek about 1 o'clock p.m. It is twenty-five miles to the next water, so we concluded to remain here 'till morning and take a fresh start for the long, dry march.

We went fishing this afternoon, but did not get a nibble, so we had to give it up as a bad job. Distance traveled, fifteen miles.

July 9. It is very warm and dusty today, but the nights are always cool and pleasant in the country.

We are out of the mosquitoes for the present, and I hope we will not catch up with any more of them soon.

We went over two more large mountains again today, and one of them was very hard to descend. These mountains are very tiresome to travel over, as we walk up most all of them, and I never ride down one. Distance traveled, twenty-five miles.

July 10. We commenced descending one of the Bear river



mountains this morning and we are not out of it yet tonight. Most of our road lay in a ravine, with frequent small branches to cross. We camp on one of these branches, where we have splendid bluegrass for our mules. Distance traveled, twenty-one miles.

July 11. Sabbath day. We are lying by today, as there is such good grazing here for our animals.

We have been traveling slow for the last week, and we will continue to take our time 'till we get to Mary's river. We want to get our mules in good condition for that river valley. As there is so much alkali water and grass in it we will have to make quick time over it. After that comes the Great Desert, so you see our road will soon be a difficult and weary one indeed.

We picked some currants and goose-berries today and had some tarts for dinner.

July 12. We came on to the Old Fort Hall road today, and passed the carcasses of a great many dead cattle. We crossed several bad branches of Raft river, and had to make a bridge for one before we could get over. Distance traveled, twenty-four miles.

July 13. Had a nice shower of rain today which, greatly to our liking, settled the dust, and it has cleared off cool and pleasant.

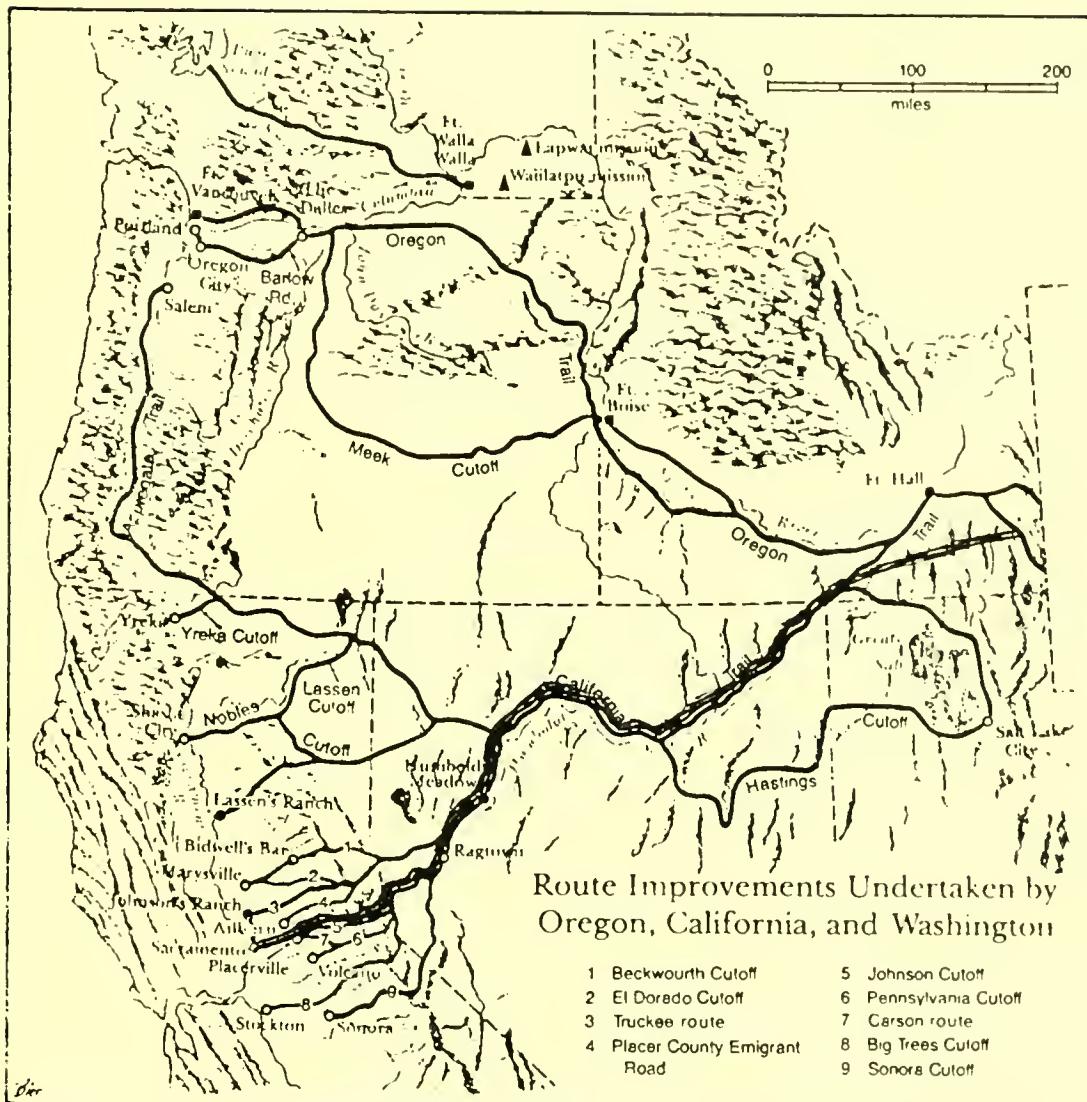
We are in camp tonight at Steeple Rock. There are a great many names on the rocks. Distance traveled, eighteen miles.

July 14. The Salt Lake road meets us again, and all the California emigrants are now on this road. The Oregon emigrants have all turned off on the Oregon route. The Digger Indians stole thirteen mules and one ox, last night, from a company just ahead of us. We camp with some company every night now and keep a strong guard out all the time, for the Indians will steal the animals if they get half a chance.

We traveled over the Goose-creek mountains today and had a very steep one to descend. We are in camp on Goose creek. Distance traveled, twenty-four miles.

July 15. Our four-mule team got mired in a bad slough this morning, but we got them out without much trouble. We have had to make a long march today to get to water, and we find the grass very scarce. Camped in Thousands Springs valley. Distance traveled thirty-five miles.





MAP 3

By the time they had completed their journey to California they traveled around 1989 miles.



July 16. The Digger Indians killed a white man a few days ago, at the place where we camped last night. We saw his grave, but did not know he had been killed by the Indians 'till today, when some emigrants informed my husband that such was the case.

We camp in Hot Springs Valley tonight. Grass is good. Distance traveled, twenty-eight miles.

July 17. We came to the Hot Springs this morning, and stopped to see them. The water comes boiling, out of the earth, and it is so hot that I could not more than touch it without burning myself. We camp near canyon creek, where we found splendid grass and clover. Distance traveled, twenty-three miles.

(Mch 14, 1894)

Installment # 5

July 18. Sabbath day. I have not been feeling well for several days. I have taken cold. My chest is sore and it pains me very much. I am taking medicine for it, and think that I will soon be better.

We came to Mary's river, or Humbolt, as some call it, today. All the emigrants dread this river, but we found some grass, which is more than we expected, as Mr. Sawyer says that there was very little here when he came out in '49. Distance traveled, thirty miles.

July 19. The Digger Indians came to a camp near us last night and stole two horses. The man on guard went to sleep and let the Indians slip past him. These are the most thieving Indians on this route, and I will be glad when we are out of their range.

We forded the North fork of Mary's river this afternoon. Distance traveled, twenty-nine miles.

July 20. A company of men went out yesterday in pursuit of those Indians who stole the horses.

Neither the water or the weather is good on this river, and the dust is very bad. We forded the river four times today, within a distance of ten miles, to avoid going over the hills. Distance traveled, thirty miles.

July 21. We had a hard march of seventeen miles today over the hills without stopping except to water our mules at an excellent cold spring which we found in the hills; had to keep traveling till we came to grass. We forded to the North side of the river and went into camp. We will travel on this



side for some distance now, as we were informed by some "packers" today that the best grass was on this side. Distance traveled, twenty-five miles.

July 22. Mr. Sawyer killed another antelope today and we are feasting. Game of all kinds is very scarce this year on the road and I have been wishing for some fresh meat for some time. My husband took some of the meat over to another camp near us and made the people a present of it. In return for his kindness the men came over to our camp with a bottle of old whisky and treated our men. These men keep whisky for sale and they retail it at two dollars a drink. That seems like a high price for liquor, but these men have to haul it from the States or from California, over the mountains, across the great desert and up this river for two hundred miles, so you see it is bound to be a costly drink.

We had more mosquitoes tonight, more than we had ever caught up with before. We drove off the road to the river, intending to camp there, but the pesky insects were so bad that we were compelled to abandon the idea of camping. I thought that they would surely eat us and the animals up before we could get back to the road. We traveled till ten o'clock at night before they left us. It turned cool at that time and we pitched our camp. Distance traveled, thirty-five miles.

July 23. The mosquitoes were so bad this morning that we had to leave camp at daylight without our breakfast. We traveled till the sun got too hot for them, then stopped and cooked our breakfast. They are not quite so bad tonight. Mr. Sawyer is not feeling well tonight. Distance traveled, twenty-five miles.

July 24. We have laid by this afternoon because Mr. Sawyer is too sick to travel. He has a high fever and a bad headache. His bones all ache and he thinks he has a touch of mountain fever. He is doctoring himself today and hopes to be better soon. This river is the worst place on the trip to be sick. The weather is bad, the water is not good and the mosquitoes annoy you to death of nights. Distance traveled, twelve miles.

July 25. Sabbath day. My husband is better today, though he don't feel too good yet.

We had the good fortune to get a camp tonight where there are no mosquitoes. Distance traveled, twenty-three miles.

July 26. They changed my carriage mule into the wagon today and put one of the wagon mules into the carriage. I did not admire the change, but submitted, and sure enough, bad luck



came of it. While crossing a slough the mule I was driving mired down and before they could unharness him, he began jumping and kicking and broke one of the shafts to the carriage. I was so sorry that I felt like crying, for I thought that we would have to leave my carriage behind. However, Mr. Sawyer went to work and mended it, so that now it is almost as stout as it ever was. Distance traveled, twenty-two miles.

July 27. We passed a trading post today and were informed that it was one hundred miles from there to the sink of this river--and won't I be glad to see the end sink out of sight!

I am getting a little tired of this wearisome trip and am very anxious to get through, but I intend to take it patiently as it comes, for I know that it will not be very long now till we reach California.

My husband has a very bad sore mouth and throat and he suffered with them very much last night. Burk Hall is the only one of our party who has not been sick on the trip, nor have I ever seen him mad or out of humor and ready jokes always quiets the troubled waters. Distance traveled, twenty miles.

July 28. We are not bothered much by mosquitoes of nights now.

Mr. Sawyer shot some sage chickens this afternoon and we had them for supper. Mr. Sawyer ate heartily and says he thinks they will cure him. Distance traveled, twenty-three miles.

July 29. We had a march of eighteen miles this morning without water or grass. Forde the river for the last time to the North side and we will travel on this side to the sink. Distance traveled, twenty miles.

July 30. Our road is better on this side of the river than it was on the other.

We had a nice shower of rain this afternoon, which is a very uncommon occurrence here at this season of the year. It settled the dust and was very refreshing. Distance traveled, twenty-two miles.

July 31. Arrived at the noted Meadows this afternoon and will remain here until tomorrow. Then our men will cut enough grass to take the mules over the desert and we will have to take all the food and water we can from here. Distance traveled, seventeen miles.

August 1. Sabbath day. We went down into the Meadows this



morning and the men cut some splendid grass, then went on down below the sink of the Mary's or Humbolt river and camped near Sulphur Springs; but the water is not good this year.

Had plenty of mosquitoes last night. Distance traveled, twenty miles.

August 2. We made a start across the great desert this morning a little after sun-up and took, as Mr. Sawyer thought, the old Truckee route, but in about six miles we came to an alkali pond which it was impossible to cross. We then went over to the Carson route. This mistake tired our mules that much more than they ought to have been, but we traveled slowly, to save them all we could. We stopped at noon and fed them, then went on until sun-down, when we stopped again and fed and cooked some supper with the remains of an old wagon as fuel. We stopped at a trading post in the afternoon and bought some water for the mules, paying seventy-five cents a gallon for it. The gentleman who keeps the post sent me a glass of port wine, and I drank it with good grace, for I was tired too. Distance traveled up to tonight, twenty-two miles.

We started again at dark and traveled till midnight when our mules commenced failing fast. Stopped and fed them and bought six buckets more of water, paying one dollar a bucket for it. I thought for sure that we would not get our teams through, for the last twelve miles was a heavy sand road. Ben got in the carriage with me, while Mr. Sawyer and Burk Hall walked on each side of the four-mule team, driving and whipping them up, but resting them often. Ben and I were in front and as I heard the whips popping and cracking, I sincerely pittied the poor beasts with all my heart. But when we came in sight of Carson river, my mule stuck up his head and started off in a fast walk, and the other mules followed suit. I was afraid my mule would run right into the river, as he was so hard mouthed and resolute that Ben could hardly hold him. We arrived at Ragtown, on the Carson river sun-rise this morning, August 3. Distance traveled, forty miles since dark yesterday evening.

This desert and lower part of Mary's river have been the worst sections of our trip and I am truly glad that we are over them safe. Though the desert is easier to cross this year than it has ever been before. There are seven or eight trading posts on it now, where refreshments and supplies of all kinds are kept for sale. There are also some trading posts here on Carson River.

August 3. We went up the Carson river five miles from Ragtown and camped for the remainder of the day. We bought some fresh beef, and have been feasting on beefsteak today.



Grass is scarce. Distance traveled five miles.

(Mch 21, 1894)

Installment # 6

August 4. We all slept well last night and didn't even have a guard out. None of us slept much the night before, as we were crossing the desert. However, I laid on my bed in the carriage and slept some in the fore part of the night and the boys did the same thing in the wagon, one at a time. But when the mules began to tire, we all became too anxious for a safe passage across the sandy waste to be visited by the angel of slumbers or the god of dreams.

We had a weary march of fifteen miles today without water or grass, but we have splendid grass tonight. Distance traveled, fifteen miles.

August 5. We had another hard march of ten miles over heavy sand this morning.

This river, however, is a pretty little stream of clear, cold and good water. There are some cotton-wood trees, willow and black berry bushes growing on its banks, and good camping and nooning places are easily found. Distance traveled, twenty miles.

August 6. I saw a lady where we nooned today, who had a fine son three days old. The arrival of the little stranger had made it necessary for his friends to go into camp for a week or more, and they had settled down to make themselves at home, quietly and patiently awaiting the time that they might resume their march.

The lady was comfortably situated and in good spirits. I have heard of several children being born on the plains, though it is not a very pleasant place for the little fellows to first see the light of day. Distance traveled, thirteen miles.

August 7. Mr. Sawyer sold our four-horse wagon and harness this morning for \$25. He thought it was not worth taking over the Sierra Nevada mountains, besides it would be very hard on the mules. The men have been getting ready all day for "packing". They will put some light things into my carriage and drive it as far as it will hold out. Mr. Sawyer will walk and drive over the bad places. I will ride a mule, and the boys will ride another. The remainder of our things will be packed on the backs of the other animals, and we will thus be converted into a pack train.

We camp at Gold Canyon. There are fifty or sixty miners at



work here, and there are three families living in log cabins. Distance traveled, three miles.

August 8. Sabbath day. Mr. Sawyer went out prospecting this morning up the canyon. He obtained about twenty-five cents worth of gold dust, but he concluded that that would not pay, so we left camp in the afternoon.

I bought some turnips today, at ten cents each, and I was inclined to think that they were pretty dear vegetables. Distance traveled, ten miles.

August 9. We came to Carson valley today. It is a beautiful valley, and some emigrants are settling here. The Mormon station has been built one or two years. It is a boarding house and house together, in a pretty location at the edge of the mountains, with tall pine trees all around it. There are some gardens here, and I bought some more turnips, at five cents each.

We have at last arrived into civilization, though things are still very high. Mr. Sawyer got one shoe put on a mule at a black-smith shop, and it cost him one dollar. Distance traveled, eighteen miles.

August 10. We traveled up the Carson Valley today to the foot of Humboldt canyon and went into camp. Distance traveled, nineteen miles.

August 11. Started into the mountains this morning through Humboldt canyon. Crossed three toll bridges. Our road is very rough, rocky and difficult to travel over. Some stones, right round and as large as hogshead, lie right in the middle of the road. Our carriage broke down, and we have abandoned it. One wheel got fastened between two rocks and broke all to pieces. We packed everything on to the mules and went on four miles further, where we are in camp on the bank of a beautiful mountain stream of pure, good water.

Our men are making more pack saddles. Distance traveled, fourteen miles.

August 12. We traveled fast today and crossed the first summit of the Sierra Nevada mountains before noon and stopped at a beautiful lake (Tahoe) to noon.

I have had the tooth-ache so bad today that I could not enjoy the beautiful landscapes and scenery.

In the afternoon we crossed the second summit of the Sierra Nevada. It is 9,000 feet high and we went over snow six feet deep. We had to travel till ten o'clock at night before we



could find a place level enough on which to pitch our camp. After it got dark Mr. Sawyer walked in front and led the first mule and the others followed, with Ben and me in the rear. The road was difficult and nothing but rocks. I could not see the path in the dark, so I just gave my mule the rein and let it follow after the others. Distance traveled, twenty-five miles.

August 13. Our road has been better today. We met up with and have been traveling with another party of emigrants today. This party consists of two men, two ladies and several children. They, like us, have left their wagon behind and are "packing."

We camp at Lake Springs, where there is good water and good grass. Distance traveled, nineteen miles.

August 14. I had the toothache so bad again today that I could take no interest in anything.

We passed some very large and tall pine and spruce trees, and are in camp in heavy timber. Distance traveled, twenty-eight miles.

August 15. We are over now to where there are some settlers. We stopped at an eating place, and the boys took the mules off the road to get water. One of them got mired and the packs got turned on the others.

We came to Placerville today about noon. On our arrival it was discovered that our dog had been left behind somewhere, and Mr. Sawyer had to go back twelve miles before he found him. We had a very dusty road today, and I tell you I am glad to be in California at last. This is quite a lively place. There are numbers of miners here, and gold mines are near the town; some families have settled here, too. I am stopping all night at a boarding house with a very nice lady. The boys are camping out in our tent, which we all have been sleeping in since we have been "packing," and the mules were taken to a hay yard. Distance traveled, twenty miles.

August 16. This morning Ben Lamar and Burk Hall concluded that they would stop here and see the mines. Ben is not stout enough to work in the mines, though his health has improved during the trip. However, he is ambitious and wants to dig gold. I hated to leave him very much, but I thought that he could do as well here as any place.

Mr. Sawyer and I left Placerville at 8 o'clock a.m., intending to go to Sacramento City, and we are in camp near a ranch house on the prairie. Distance traveled, thirty miles.



August 17. We reached Sacramento City at noon today. I went in with the pack mules in a cloud of dust, Mr. Sawyer having to whip my mule up with the others.

We have been out three months and eight days from St. Joseph.

We are stopping at the American House and glad that we are, at last, at the end of our journey safe and well, though we are tired and need rest.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mr. Sawyer made three trips, in all, to California. He went overland in '49 and came back in the fall of 1850. He could not content himself to stay in Kentucky, however, and concluded to go back again. So in the spring of 1851 he, in company with my brother, B.B. Lamar and George Bruner, all of Hancock County, went out by water, by the way of New Orleans and the Isthmus. He soon got homesick again and came back in the fall of '51, thinking that he would either settle here in Kentucky or move with his wife to California. He chose the latter course, hence our overland trip in 1852.

\* \* \* \* \*

I thank the kind editors of the BRECKINRIDGE NEWS for bearing with me thus lengthily, and I hope that the narrative of my tedious trip has not proved tedious to the many dear readers of our favorite paper.

Francis H. Sawyer

The End.













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